

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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SUBJECT: NEW NATIONAL TRADE UNION CENTER FORMED

REF: (A) LAGOS A-186; (B) LAGOS A-58

1. SUMMARY: FOUR OF NIGERIA'S SIX NATIONAL LABOR CENTERS SIGNED AGREEMENT AUGUST 23 TO MERGE INTO SINGLE BODY TO BE CALLED NIGERIAN TRADE UNION FEDERATION (NTUF). INAUGURAL MEETING TO APPROVE CONSTITUTION AND ELECT NTUF OFFICERS SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 28-29. MERGER PROCEEDING DESPITE UNCERTAINTY OF NTUF'S FUTURE UNDER TRADE UNION DECREE 31. ONCE EFFECTIVE, MERGER SHOULD SHARPEN COMPETITION BETWEEN MODERATE UNITED LABOR CONGRESS (ULC) AND NTUF. END SUMMARY

2. FOUR NATIONAL TRADE UNION CENTRAL BODIES (NIGERIAN TRADE UNION CONGRESS, NIGERIAN WORKERS COUNCIL, LABOR UNITY FRONT AND UNITED LABOR CONGRESS RECONSTITUTED) SIGNED FORMAL AGREEMENT AUGUST 23 TO DISSOLVE THEIR ORGANIZATIONS AND TO REFORM AS ONE NATIONAL UNION CENTER - THE NTUF. AGREEMENT RESULTS FROM SEVERAL MONTHS PROLONGED DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN VARIOUS UNION FACTIONS, AND BRINGS MUCH SOUGHT AFTER LABOR UNITY IN NIGERIA ONE STEP CLOSER TO REALIZATION. CREATION OF NTUF GIVES NATION TWO MAJOR NATIONAL UNION CENTERS, AS UNITED LABOR CONGRESS (ULC) LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITHSTOOD PUBLIC RELATIONS ATTEMPTS TO FORCE IT TO JOIN

IN MERGER MOVEMENT. NTUF PUBLICLY CLAIMS TI REPRESENTS
68 PER CENT OF ALL REGISTERED TRADE UNIONS.

3. NTUF WILL HOLD INAUGURAL MEETING SEPTEMBER 28-29 TO
APPROVE CONSTITUTION AND TO ELECT OFFICERS. MEETING IS
ALSO EXPECTED TO GIVE MORE ACCURATE FIGURE OF NUMBER OF
AFFILIATED UNIONS.

4. SPEAKING AT NTUF LAUNCHING CEREMONY, S. U. BASSEY
(SECRETARY OF FORMER NTUC), SAID MERGER AGREEMENT IS
IRREVOCABLE, AND PLEDGED NTUF WOULD REPRESENT AND CATER
FOR INTERESTS OF WORKING POPULATION. NTUF, HE ADDED , IS
DETERMINED TO ESTABLISH PERMANENT TRADE UNION UNITY.
DURING BRIEF DISCUSSION WITH EMBASSY LABOR ASSISTANT
AFTER CEREMONY, NTUC LEADERS GOODLUCK AND BASSEY SAID
LEADERSHIP OF NTUF WOULD PROBABLY INCLUDE BASSEY (NTUC) -
GENERAL SECRETARY, A. A. ISHILA (LUF) - PRESIDENT, W.
GOODLUCK (NTUC) 1ST VIIT IQPSIDENT , J. U. AKPAN (NWC)
DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY, J. O. JAMES (ULCR) 2ND VICE
PRESIDENT AND A. KALEJAIYE/ TREASURER. FINAL DECISION,
HOWEVER, IS FOR INAUGURAL MEETING.

5. COMMENT: TRADE UNION UNITY HAS BEEN SOUGHT SINCE BIRTH
OF UNIONS IN NIGERIA, AND FORMATION OF NTUF REPRESENTS ONE
MORE ATTEMPT PERTIALLY TO ACHIZAFTHIS NEBULOUS GOAL.
EVEN THIS LIMITED SUCCESS MAY BE THREATENED WITH FAILURE,
DEPENDING ON GOVERNMENT'S REACTIONS. TRADE UNION DECREE 31,
WHICH SETS FORTH PROCEDURES FOR FORMATION OF CENTRAL LABOR
BODIES, HAS BEEN PROMULGATED BUT NOT GIVEN EFFECTIVE DATE.
IF FMG MAKES DECREE EFFECTIVE BEFORE NTUF INAUGURAL MEETING
TAKES PLACE, OR MAKES EFFECTIVE DATE RETROACTIVE, UNIONS
INVOLVED IN NTUF FORMATION MAY BE FACED WITH NECESSITY
OF FULFILLING REQUIREMENTS SET FORTH IN DECREE OR HAVING
ALL THEIR EFFORTS REVERSED. ANY PROLONGED DELAY IN
INAUGURATION COULD SEE FORCES OF DISSENSION CAUSE MERGER
EFFORTS TO FALL APART.

6. NTUF MERGER DOES, HOWEVER, GIVE APPEARANCE THAT LEFT-
WING UNIONS ARE SUCCESSFULLY OUT-MANEUVERING MODERATE ULC
IN BATTLE TO BECOME DOMINANT FORCE IN LABOR MOVEMENT.
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ILLUSION OF UNITY WHICH NTUF PROJECTS CONTRASTS SHARPLY
WITH APPARENT LACK OF ACTIVITY WITHIN ULC. THIS ILLUSION
IS HEIGHTENED BY LEFT - WING UNION LEADERS' STATEMENTS
CRITIZING DECREE 31, ON WHICH ULC REMAINS SILENT, AND
HELPS LEFT-WING MAINTAIN IMAGE AS PROTECTOR OF NIGERIA'S
WORKING CLASS. ULC MAY BE FORCED TO OVERCOME ITS OWN
INTERNAL STRUGGLES RATHER QUICKLY IF IT HOPES EFFECTIVELY
TO COUNTER THIS IMPRESSION.

7. MERGER ALSO SERVES TO SHARPEN COMPETITION BETWEEN
ULC AND NTUF, POSSIBILITY FMG MAY HAVE PROMOTED IN
ALLOWING MORE THAN ONE NATIONAL UNION BODY UNDER
DECREE 31. WE EXPECT BOTH GROUPS TO STEP UP
EFFORTS TO ENTICE OPPOSITION'S AFFILIATES INTO THEIR
OWN CAMPS, BUT WE ARE RELUCTANT TO THINK EITHER GROUP
WILL SEE NEED TO IMPROVE ITS EFFECTIVENESS AS A TRADE
UNION. IN LIGHT HISTORY OF PAST UNITY ATTEMPTS HERE,
NTUF LIKELY TO SUFFER SAME FATE AS OTHER UNITED LABOR CENTERS
ONCE AURA OF MERGER ACCOMPLISHMENT HAS WORN OFF AND NORMAL
INTERNAL POLITICAL, PERSONEL AND TRIBAL CONFLICTS RESUME.
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